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ORATION

DELIVERED BY

HON. GEORGE C. HAZLETON

ON

DECORATION DAY,

AT

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA,

May 29, 1880.

WITH OTHER PAPERS.

WASHINGTON, D. C.:
NATIONAL REPUBLICAN PRINTING HOUSE,
1880.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	Page.
PREFACE.....	3
ORATION—Hon. Geo. C. Hazleton	5
OPENING REMARKS—Dep't Com'd'r C. C. Royce	
ELEGY—William Winter	

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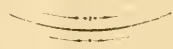
PREFACE.

In compliance with the kind request of friends, I present in this more permanent form my oration delivered at Arlington, Virginia, Decoration Day, May 29, 1880. It presents, as I believe, a truthful review of the great struggle which ended in the triumph of the Union cause. It is intended as a declaration of principles which underlie all free governments; and it is made in that spirit which should characterize their assertion and maintenance until they become the controlling power throughout our Republic.

G. C. H.



“ Virtue alone outbuilds the Pyramids—
Her monuments shall stand when Egypt’s fall ”



ORATION.

VETERANS OF THE GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: There is in the human heart a natural veneration for all that is heroic and self-sacrificing in the history of the human race. The world is full of monuments which commemorate public and private virtue. The mouldering sepulchre, consecrated by the undying eloquence of Pericles, is still associated with the most brilliant of all victories in Athenian history. The peasants of the Tyrol think there is no monument in all the world like theirs and no memory half so dear as that of Andreas Hofer. Amid the cantons of free Switzerland the hero of the old ^{end} ~~legion~~ is to-day a bright reality; and in Scotland, from the borders to the crags of the highlands, the sword of Wallace still gleams and the memory of Bruce is still cherished. At Westminster Abbey the English people for eight centuries have crowned and buried their royal rulers, and within that gray old tomb of the aristocracy have been gathered through successive ages the illustrious remains of those who had built for themselves a still more enduring monument in learning and philosophy, in art and literature, and of those who had been the "captains of armies, the leaders of parties, the oracles of senates and the ornaments of courts."

However much we may desire to linger among the honored dead of the old world, we turn instinctively this morning to a heritage of our own, more precious than all, the great cemeteries and the many lonely graves upon our own free soil, set apart and consecrated forever by a free people as the sacred places of the Republic, wherein repose the remains of forms once manly and brave, who surrendered up their lives a willing sacrifice to the cause of liberty and Union. These graves—who shall number them? These dead—who shall

tell their story? From the far southwestern borders of Texas to the pine-clad hills of Maine, and from the source of the mighty river of the great Mississippi valley among the lakes of the North, until it pours its resistless flood into the humid gulf of the South are sown, as if broadcast, the white stones marking the last resting-places of our heroic dead.

There are, too, three score great National Cemeteries in which are gathered all that remains of those who were denied the final boon of a grave by their own streams or on their own hillsides. In them are gathered the scores of thousands who fell where only heroes fall, at the front, where hissing bullet and shrieking shell tell that brave men are daring all the terrors of deadly battle, for principle's sake. Almost a score of years have past, and yet what memories some of these great cemeteries recall. Pittsburg Landing and Seven Pines, Stone River and Antietam, Vicksburg and Gettysburg, Chattanooga and Fredericksburg, Marietta and Cold Harbor. To mention but these few names is to bring to mind the grandest struggle ever waged in freedom's behalf; to attempt to tell that in them lie the dead of a full hundred of mighty battles would be to give the history of one of the longest and costliest wars, in life and blood, ever waged by man.

Nor can I pause here; there are still four more kindred to themselves, over whose mention the heart shrinks and the tongue well nigh refuses utterance—Florence, Richmond, Salisbury and Andersonville—the saddest spots on earth, where moulder away by thousands, brave prisoners of war, murdered by starvation, whose ghastly visages thrilled death itself with horror, whose skeleton shadows darken the walls of war memories forever, and for whose torturing of body and mind there can be no excuse, and no atonement on earth or in heaven. It were better for humanity if this sad picture could be veiled from the sight forever.

Taken altogether, then, the National Cemeteries are the tokens and the evidence of the priceless inheritance which we enjoy. They constitute the source from which a free

people shall draw their proudest inspiration, and they shall remain, cherished and protected by a grateful Nation, the hallowed shrines of Liberty so long as she shall maintain in this broad land her empire and her home. †Not alone then to Arlington, but to all these a grateful people bring to-day their yearly tribute of love and flowers.

The conflict of arms in which over a quarter of a million of American freemen sacrificed their manly lives, and which you of the Grand Army of the Republic happily survive, was the natural and irresistible result,—the culmination in war of a long civil conflict over principles which underlie free government, and which constitute the very foundations of civilization and human progress. It came like storm-clouds, surcharged with heat, long-gathering, which at last burst in bolts of fire and falling floods, to purify the earth and air.

The issue between the two forces closely drawn and well defined, compassed the territorial integrity of the Government; the destruction of the Union and of liberty itself. The one sprung to arms upon the abstraction that the right of secession was reserved to the States, and upon the theory that by right, capital should own its labor, control it, buy it, sell it, debauch it. The other came to the fields of war with the conviction entrenched within its heart that the Union was inseparable, that labor should be its own master, wear no shackles, and stand erect before the law of government, and before God and man, honorable and honored. Liberty, then, must cast her fortunes with the Union cause, or perish on our continent. Under the agis of the doctrine of State rights slavery could recoil within State lines and exist for a time; but smitten with the fear of death by circumscription or elimination by the growth of free sentiment in the North, it had become aggressive, and had sought to make its sentiments and its power national. With an eye to its own aggrandizement it had gained political ascendancy in the Republic through the complicity and alliance of partisan friends in the free States. By converting to its own use the rich lands of the South in great plantations, and by the absorp-

tion of all industries, it had forced vast numbers of its free middle classes into the border free States, and, strange as it may seem, there to strengthen by political alliance the power from which they had been compelled to flee. It had extended its lines and outposts, carried its sentiment and its flag into the new States of the Pacific coast, into the great territories, and among the Indian tribes; it had drawn into its service a large portion of the press of the North; it had invaded the army and the navy, and soiled the ermine of the courts. It trusted no man who was not known to be as faithful to its interests as the needle to the pole. It sought the subversion of freedom and its own national aggrandizement through the power of party organization. For thirty years dominant in the Republic, with adherents in every State of the Union, commanding the allegiance of its northern wing by lavishing favors, tempting ambition with the honors and emoluments of office, dispensing the patronage of a great Government with royal generosity, until at last, when it saw that popular will, which intended to restrict it to its constitutional limits, give promise of success in the free States, and leaving the gallant Douglas to lead his forlorn hope, it merged conspiracy into open rebellion, and carried the platform of the Charleston convention into the organic structure of the confederacy at Montgomery, there confronting the civilization of nineteen hundred years with the atrocious declaration: "Build we here a new government whose corner-stone is human slavery."

They had not bartered for treachery in vain. From an Executive who was bound by an oath, recorded on earth and in heaven, to execute the law; who held the same rod of empire that had been wielded with successful power in the hands of Jackson, came the cowardly response, "The Republic surrenders. The republic is dead both by the express provisions of its constitution and by implication. Whether Congress has the constitutional power to make war against one or more States and require the Executive of the Federal Government to carry it on by means of force to be drawn

from the other States is a question for Congress to consider. It must be admitted that no such power is expressly given, nor are there any words in the Constitution which imply it." Standing here amidst these graves at Arlington, I would not be unjust to the living or the dead, nor am I when I declare that the attempted betrayal of the cause of the colonies by Arnold furnishes but a faint parallel in infamy to this. And now Lincoln came—the calm, patient, but heroic representative of a new dispensation. He found the rebellion organized, consolidated, defiant; the Government stripped of its resources by the consent and complicity of the outgoing administration, and the red hand of rebellion on its throat.

The crisis presented its stern alternatives—war was one; the surrender of the popular will, by which he was fairly and constitutionally elected, and to whatever demands the rebellion in arms might dictate, the other. One force or the other must conquer. God did not make room for two separate nationalities between the lakes and the gulf. No peaceful line of division could be indicated or imagined. Any such line would be a line of war itself, crowned with forts and bristling with bayonets; a line of constant incursions both North and South; of waste and of blood; a situation ending in military despotism and enveloping all in ruin.

The rebellion, beyond a doubt, compassed the subversion of the whole Nation to its power and its control; first, by its superiority in the art of war; second, by defection in its favor in the free States growing out of long continued political alliance. In its organic act it made no provision for the location of a permanent seat of government, and contained no reference to territorial limits. Washington was the key to all its ambitions, and its objective capital. It early declared, "If Maryland secedes the District of Columbia will fall to her by reversionary right, the same as Sumpter to South Carolina, Pulaski to Georgia, and Pickens to Florida. When we have the right we will demand the surrender of Washington, just as we did in the other cases, and

will enforce the demand at every hazard and at whatever cost." Montgomery and Richmond were only the approaches to a seat of power that commanded the continent, and if besieged, taken and held, crowned the cause of rebellion with success. The loss of our constitutional seat of government, in such a war, would have been far greater than that of Paris or Versailles to France, or Berlin to the German empire. And this was fully comprehended by each of the contending forces.

In this great contest the rebellion fired the first gun, and the Nation the last. But the first shook the free States to their very center; shivered party lines and crystalized anew the patriotism of the people of the North. Each of the contending forces underrated the strength of the other. The Regular Army was demoralized and divided in sentiment. The people must save their Government, or it must fall. Liberty hath ever found her defenders among the yeomanry of the land, and to the Nation's defense in this hour of imminent peril, from every class and condition of life, they came to the magnificent number of over two million two hundred and fifty thousand of men, who served nearly two years and a-half each.

There was another and a deeper meaning to this conflict. Two civilizations found themselves face to face in a gigantic struggle for the possession of a continent. The civilization of the North was the outgrowth of long and patient industry; of resources gathered by constant hardship, and saved by the most rigid economy; a civilization of schools, churches, cities and workshops; of skilled, intelligent and trained labor in shop and field; patient in all things and enduring all things—the grand result of the development of that germ of power, planted at Plymouth Rock, augmented in its growth through wilderness and hardship and storm, outward and onward by the sturdy emigrant from the despotisms of the old world joining its march and sharing its fortune. From this development came a President and cabinet leaders, worthy of the great cause they held in charge,

✧ Lincoln, Chase, Seward, and the tireless Stanton, who came not too late for service as Carnot came to Napoleon. From this came also a corps of generals fresh from the homes and altars of the people, as learned in the civil polity of free Government as in the art of war; with no dreams of ambition beyond the faithful service required to maintain that government and the dearest rights of man, men whose names I need not mention in your presence, for they are enshrined in the hearts of the American people. From this source came the armies of the Union, representing the learning of the professions, the skill of the artisan and the industry of the farmer. It embraced all classes, from the scholar who could read the language of the stars and trace the constellations of the heavens, to him whose only learning was duty to his country. These soldiers could make books, print newspapers, build bridges and construct canals, build navies for the sea and railroads for the land. Indeed, the armies of the Union were the embodiment of fertility of resource and endurance of hardships; they were organized for efficiency and for victory. In this, and not in greater valor, consisted our superiority over the armies of the rebellion. It was this that enabled us to maintain our armies in the field, better fed and paid, better led and armed, better clothed and cared for than any army of any war in the world's history. The very law of free labor which the leaders of the rebellion had despised became in the end the Nation's defense and the rebellion's destroyer.

To the southern armies great praise has been awarded for holding the field so long and so well against the power of the National Government. Far be it from me to detract in the least degree from the difficulty of their undertaking and the strength and endurance they evinced in protracting the great struggle. On the other hand, is it just to ourselves, to you, veterans of the war, to the inanimate dead here buried, that we should underrate the great work we undertook, the obstacles we overcame and the magnitude of the success we achieved? The problem was a mighty one to solve. Eight-

teen millions of people, schooled only in the arts of peace, undertook to overcome and subdue ten millions of people in their own homes and mountain fastnesses ; amid natural barriers of great strength ; in a territory considerably larger than the combined countries of Austria, France, the British islands, Italy and Germany ; a territory that must be encompassed both by land and by sea. Four millions of this number were the most docile and faithful laborers in the world, working unrequited day and night upon the broad and fertile fields of the South to maintain the families at home and the armies in the field. This population of the slave States was solidified in the interest of the rebellion, except from the mountains of East Tennessee, where a love for the Union was still cherished and where the fires on freedom's altars still burned, there came men stalwart and brave to our standard, as the illustrious column of Plataeans, came to the aid of their natural allies on the fields of Marathon.

In magnitude and extent this great work finds no parallel in the annals of history. You may well be proud as we recur to-day, after twenty years have passed by and our vision is clear and accurate, to the great line of operations which existed and was maintained by the armies and fleets of the Nation in May, 1864. That time saw the armies of the Union prepared for the final offensive operations. One million two hundred thousand men were under arms on land. As they faced south the right of the Union line rested at Santa Fe, New Mexico. Stretching eastward, it connected with the centre at Vicksburgh, on the Mississippi. From Vicksburgh the center of the line passed through Bridgeport, Ala., through Chattanooga and Knoxville, Tenn., and Cumberland Gap, to the stations around Clarksburgh, in West Virginia, where it joined the left of the Union line, or those forces operating in connection with the armies in front of Washington. From West Virginia the left of the line extended to the vicinity of Fortress Monroe. The whole constituted a line of operations of about one thousand six hundred miles long. Along this line every intersecting country

road had its picket post ; each railway bridge its block-house ; every great highway its frowning fort ; and each line of military operations its army. Nor was this all. Commencing near Fortress Monroe, the work of the Union sailor began. Away southward, around stormy Hatteras, down along the low, swampy coasts of the Carolinas and Georgia, around the great peninsula of Florida to the harbor of Pensacola, and thence along the Gulf coast past Alabama and Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas, to the Mexican frontier at the mouth of the Rio Grande, stretched the tireless, sleepless line of the Union blockade, almost two thousand miles long. Every harbor on this enormous line was sealed, every inlet and creek, every bay and bayou was watched by day and picketed by night. Operating with this great fleet were two large armies, one in the Carolinas and one with New Orleans as its base on the Gulf. Taking no step backward, this mighty line moved forward to certain victory ; and when this was achieved, and the authority of the Government established, these armies inured to war, and stronger for duty than ever before, leaving the fruits of their victories to the statesmanship of the Nation, melted away into the civil pursuits of life to appear no more in army array forever.

Since then peace hath produced grand results. The great people who solved the problem of war have been engaged in preserving the principles which it vindicated, and in making forever permanent in their government the fruits of its victories. Not in the extension of National domain through conquest, by which in the old nations perished, but in the practical and successful solution of the problem of free self-government in that broad territory which we now have, rests the glory of the present and the security of the future.

There have been other wars in the world's history which have decided the fate of nations, but greater than all was this which eliminated slavery from a continent, enthroned freedom in power, and placed the Republic of the new world at the fore-front of the nations of the earth.

In March, 1861, I stood at the east front of the capitol,

among the vast assemblage that witnessed the first inauguration of Abraham Lincoln. In its rear and on its flanks were shotted batteries of artillery. The atmosphere was hissing hot with hostility to the incoming administration and toward the Government of the fathers. I saw that day a gang of slaves, men made in God's image, driven in chains up Pennsylvania Avenue, like a herd of brutes under the master's lash. Now, the shining towers of Howard University, the freedmen's seat of learning, greets the white monument to Washington as it rises higher and higher into the heavens. I look over this broad land, and other and kindred institutions appear to bless the freedmen's way to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

I see your dusky faces now amid this great multitude of free men and free women. You have come to Arlington, to these shades of the mighty dead, with gratitude in your hearts and with sweet wild flowers in your hands to strew upon the graves of those who in the ranks of war helped break your chains and give to you a sovereignty higher than prince or throne could give. Their work is finished. If you cannot in the future as a race acquire and possess the elements of manly power, if you cannot bring in time as the fruits of your redemption, knowledge, wealth, self-reliance and that courage and manhood which know its rights and knowing dare maintain, then your part as citizens in this free Government will be a mournful failure. The Nation, with abiding confidence in your capacity to accomplish all this, takes you by the hand this day and bids you try.

To the development of all the war secured, the way is opening broader and broader with the onward march of time. How can the vanquished of the South long hate the generous victor that shares with him in full the fruits of victory? How shall he complain of the generous condition upon which he is allowed to return, after four long years of warfare against the Government, to stand upon an equality with every citizen of the Republic who has been faithful in all things to her interests? The friends of those who fell in the rebellion, obedient to the natural affection of the human

heart, build monuments and strew the sweetest flowers that springtime brings upon the graves of their departed heroes; but the flowers will wither, and the monuments, in time, will crumble and perish, as a new South, blest by freedom and progress, shall take its inspiration with us, from these graves, where sleep forever her best and truest friends.

“Virtue alone outbuilds the pyramids—

Her monuments shall last when Egypt’s fall.”

The future is full of hope and promise. The cause of freedom will hold its place and move onward to higher results.

I stood but yesterday in the great presence of the statue of emancipation in Lincoln Park, an ideal to me of one of the grandest deeds in all mankind’s history. I seemed to hear him, whose martyred life went out for liberty, declare, “Upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God,” as he broke the chain to let the oppressed go free.

I saw the freedman with severed manacle, type of a race of slaves redeemed, catch the first thrill of freedom’s inspiration as the great deliverer bade him “rise.”

I saw the armies of the Union sweep the fields of bloody war as lightning^s cleave the air.

I saw the Constitution of the fathers built in compromise transformed by the power of war and peace into the fullness of freedom’s magna-charta, in whose light the God-given law of equality for man stood resplendent.

I heard the highest court on earth, the arbiter of American law, remove a former decree and declare the eternal principles of freedom to be the law of the Republic forevermore.

I saw the Union of the States, united in bands of love and harmony, devoted to freedom and progress, carrying in its right hand length of days and in its left riches and honor, and over all I read the immortal words of Bancroft: “At the foot of every page in history may be written—God REIGNS.”

REMARKS
OF
DEPT COM'D'R C. C. ROYCE.

Commander C. C. Royce called the assemblage to order in the following words:

The ceaseless tread of Time in his encircling round has again brought us to the threshold of the temple of patriotism. We pause a moment to renew our vows of allegiance to an undivided country; to recall and rehearse the valor and sacrifices of an army of patriots, and above all, amid the tender buds and fragrant blossoms of a re-awakened spring-life, to pay a memorial tribute of respect and affection to those thousands whose mortal remains abide not only in this beautiful cemetery, but all over the land, and which serve as a constant reminder of the value of the heritage committed to our care, and the priceless lives sacrificed to preserve it.

“They never fail who die in a great cause,
Though years elapse and others share as sad a doom.
They but augment the deep and sweeping thoughts
Which overspread all others, and conduct
The world at last to freedom.”

The grand theme which annually brings together this assemblage is freighted with a certain immortality in the minds of those who participated in the dangers and privations of the late war, which stimulates their patriotism, enlarges the circle of their sympathies for the widow and orphan, and serve to cement more closely the ties which were welded together in the fire of battle.

We are here to-day pursuant to a beautiful and touching custom established by the Grand Army of the Republic twelve years ago. We come with hearts full of love for the patriotic principles upon which our order is founded; full of

sympathy for the fate of the comrades whose martyred blood appeals to Heaven in behalf of human liberty, and full of affection for the dear old flag so proudly waving above us as the symbol of a great, free and united people. With malice toward none; with charity for all, we invite your patient and interested attention to the services which will follow, in the hope and full assurance that you will carry with you to your homes fresh thoughts and reawakened feelings of fraternity, charity, and loyalty. And right here, on behalf of the organization which I have the honor to represent, I desire to express our hearty appreciation of the sympathetic and cheerful spirit of co-operation which has characterized the officers and soldiers of the various army, marine and militia organizations, in their participation with us in our parade. Whatever of success may, in the public mind, have attended our efforts is in a large measure due to their kindly suggestions and cordial assistance. We have with us again this year the officers and comrades of Farragut Post, No. 1, of Portsmouth, Va. For this their second pilgrimage to our National "Mecca," and for their earnest zeal in striving to render our services more abundantly successful and imposing, we are sincerely grateful. Let us now address ourselves to the sacred and interesting duties of the occasion.

ELEGY.

BY WILLIAM WINTER.

Mr. William Winter, of the New York *Tribune*, was introduced, and read the following :

I.

If this were all, if, lost with those that perished—
O'er whom these winds of summer softly sigh—
Our hopes were buried with the hearts we cherished,
And life were nothing but to toil and die ;

What sadder scene than this that blooms before us,
With Nature's garlands decked, could earth display !
What mockery were this heaven that's bending o'er us,
Glad with the sunshine of the glittering May !

But here, where late with naked branches striving—
Wet with the icy tears of wintry grief—
Across this lonely field of sorrow driving,
The angry tempest whirled the withered leaf ;

Now swings the pendant bloom ; now opening roses
Woo the soft zephyr with their balmy breath ;
Boughs wave, birds sing, and silver mist reposes,
In bliss, above these emerald waves of death.

And sure His hand, that out of desolation
Can thus the arid wastes of earth relume,
Ne'er meant the crown of all His vast creation
One hour of woe, and then the eternal tomb !

But, were this all, were hope with being ended,
In these dark cells that shrine our sacred dead ;
Were all our prayers and tears in vain expended,
Our passion, labor, faith, forever sped ;

Who would not yet, all selfish impulse spurning,
Live for mankind, and triumph with the just !
Who, from the field of honor backward turning,
Would trail a sullied ensign in the dust !

Though Fate were cruel, human will undaunted—
 Supreme o'er torture, regnant over time—
 Can quell the bitterest foe that ever vaunted
 This mortal frailty, which were Nature's crime !

It may be—every generous trust forbidden—
 That, while these beauteous orbs of ruin roll,
 From the dark sleep in which the dead are hidden
 A flower can wake, but not the human soul ;

Yet, sweet is every love and every longing ;
 Yet shines the dream of heaven in childhood's eyes :
 And troops of angel phantoms yet come thronging
 To Fancy's vision, in the twilight skies :

Yet stirs the heart with nameless, vague emotion,
 When moonlight sleeps upon the summer sea ;
 Yet forest depths and lonely wastes of ocean,
 And mountain voices set the spirit free :

And, borne on wings of glorious endeavor,
 Man yet can soar above his baser clay—
 Throned in high deeds, forever and forever,
 That cannot die, and will not pass away !

II.

High were their deeds o'er whom our hearts are weeping !
 Safe bides their fame, in all men's love and praise !
 Hallowed the mould in which their dust is sleeping,
 And sweet the memory that has crowned their days !

Ah ! once for them young Hope unveiled her splendor !
 Ah ! once for them Time ran in golden sands !
 They knew affliction's accents, soft and tender ;
 They felt the touch of loving lips and hands.

They saw the awful face of sovereign Beauty ;
 White arms of proud Ambition lured them on :
 But in their hearts breathed low the voice of duty—
 They heard it, and they answered : they are gone.

The midnight wind was cold upon their faces—
 Pale in the silence of the crimson sod ;
 But who shall paint through what resplendent spaces
 Their souls sprang upward to the light of God !

No more for them, in summer twilight's glimmer,
 Shall distant music smite the chords of pain :
 No more, as evening shades grow slowly dimmer,
 Shall wandering fragrance pierce the tortured brain.

No more of lingering doubt, nor stern denial,
 Nor baffled toil, nor slow, embittering strife !
 But now, at once, the crown of earthly trial—
 The long, long summer of eternal life.

Calm-fronted, staunch, expectant, and unshaken,
 Who dares the worst that any fate can bring—
 For him, by iron purpose ne'er forsaken,
 The grave no victory has, and death no sting.

We can but serve: some by the instant giving
 Of all that hand could do or heart could prize;
 Some by a meek, laborious, patient living—
 A daily toil, an hourly sacrifice.

We falter on, now hoping, now despairing,
 And hour by hour drag out life's little span;
 They passed, in one tremendous deed of daring—
 They lived for Honor, and they died for Man.

Pile thick the amaranth and the myrtle o'er them—
 For whom our lanrelled banners flash and flow—
 Roses that love, and pansies that deplore them,
 And lillies, weeping from their hearts of snow !

Breathe low, ye murmuring pines, ye whispering grasses !
 Ye dews of summer night, fall softly here !
 Be sorrow's sigh in every breeze that passes,
 And every rain drop be a mourner's tear !

And oh, ye stars, ye holy lights that cumber
 The deep of heaven, pour benedictions down !
 Shed your sweet incense on this sacred slumber—
 Bright as our love, and pure as their renown !

Breathe our farewell ! ah, very gently breathe it—
 Like ocean's murmur in the coral shell,
 And tender as the sea flowers that enwreath it—
 Forever and forevermore, Farewell !

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